

## **IDAHO VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**

April 10, 2008

Pursuant to agreement, a meeting of the Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission was held in the conference room at the Idaho State Veterans Home – Boise, Thursday, April 10, 2008, for the purpose of reviewing program reports and other items of business.

**Present:** Commissioner, Donald Riegel, Chairman  
Commissioner, Ken Pitcher, Vice Chairman  
Commissioner Frank Richardson  
Commissioner Art Gimpel  
Commissioner Mel Napier  
David Brasuell, Administrator, IDVS  
Susan Lowman-Thomas, Human Resource Officer, IDVS  
Debbie Spence, Financial Specialist Principal, IDVS  
Jim Adams, Administrative Support Manager, IDVS  
James Roberts, Administrator, IDVH – Boise  
Clark Graebel, Administrator, IDVH – Lewiston  
Tom Ressler, Office of Veterans Advocacy  
Zach Rodriguez, Director, Veterans Cemetery  
Tammy Hebdon, Administrative Assistant 2, IDVS

Chairman Don Riegel called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

### **INTRODUCTION OF GUEST:**

Julie Weaver, Deputy Attorney General, State of Idaho

### **APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 2007 IDAHO VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES:**

Commissioner Ken Pitcher moved that the Commission dispense with the reading of the January 2008 minutes and approve them as corrected: change spelling of Commissioner Riegel's name. Commissioner Art Gimpel seconded the motion; motion carried.

### **SWEARING IN OF NEW COMMISSIONER:**

Commissioner Riegel swore in Mel Napier, our new Idaho Veterans Affairs Commissioner from the Treasure Valley, Boise area. Commissioner Napier accepted the oath of office and began his appointment.

## **IDAHO DIVISION OF VETERANS SERVICES HUMAN RESOURCES:**

Susan Lowman-Thomas, Senior Human Resource Specialist for the Division provided the Commission with an update on the happenings within Human Resources.

As a refresher to the existing Commission members, and training for the new members, Susan presented the Respectful Workplace training. This focus of this training is to bring awareness to the issues that may cause employees to be offended or feel uncomfortable in their work place, and what options are available if this happens. IDVS is very committed to assuring that all employees feel comfortable and safe in their workplace, therefore this training is refreshed each year, and is provided to all new hires.

Susan reiterated the cost and time involved with turnovers, and provided the Commission with an update on how IDVS compares to the private sector. The average turnover in the private nursing home sector is 65%, and currently the Home averages are well below that. However, the turnover in Nursing continues to be a problem. The Director of Nursing, Suzanne Kress, has reported that during 2007 she asked those leaving why, and was told they were taking positions that paid up to \$3.00/hour more, and most of the RN's were averaging \$6.00/hour more. Unfortunately, pay will continue to be an issue, but with attention being focused on increasing the pay for these types of jobs, there is potential for this to become less of a driving issue for turnover.

In the area of workers compensation, Susan identified the most common workers compensation claims filed - lifting, back strains, shoulder strains — and commended the Homes because even with a few claims being filed, the Division is doing very well. In 2006 claims exceeded premiums collected, and this affects our rating for four (4) years. Consequently, even though our claims have declined, our premium will not reflect this until 2010. Dave Brasuell commented that the trend in claims is one of the factors the Governor looks at to determine how well an agency is implementing the Respectful and Safe Workplace program, so it is very important.

In closing Susan reported that the CEC changes for FY2009 have begun. During this years Legislative session the Legislators approved a 3% increase, with 1% to offset the increase in insurance premiums to be given to all employees with a favorable performance evaluation and the additional 2% to be given at the agencies discretion, based on performance and where their position is in the merit matrix (median). The increases will be processed during the month of June and employees will begin seeing them in July.

## **COMMISSIONER 101 TRAINING:**

Julie Weaver, Deputy Attorney General, presented Commissioner 101 training for the new and existing Commissioners to assure that all understood their roles, the State travel policy, open meeting laws, public records law and ethics in government. Each

Commissioner was given a training book covering each of these issues, which they will retain (extra copies available at the Division office).

**Highlights of the training included:**

- ✚ A chart indicating level of authority and who answers to whom
- ✚ A reminder that when voting on issues make sure the issue benefits/affects all veterans equally, not a particular single group (VFW, AL, etc)
- ✚ Open Meeting Law:
  - 3 members together discussing issues that concern Veteran Affairs, is a meeting
  - All such meetings must be open, including “virtual” meetings
  - Don’t discuss commission issues in public
  - Post meetings in advance-in public & on website (not yet law); agenda posted 24 hrs in advance
  - Minutes must be kept and made available to the public
- ✚ Executive sessions
  - are not encouraged as they exclude the public
  - very limited subjects justify exec session: personnel issues concerning administrator actions, possible legal actions pending, communications with risk mgmt or insurance rep, records excluded from public disclosure (medical, attorney letters, etc.)
  - In order to go into Exec Session, agenda must list the Exec Session and a motion must be made in the open meeting, stating the Idaho Code that applies (page 4 has samples)
  - Can’t take any action in Exec Session-to include making a decision about what you are going to do (very tricky with HR issues-need to form an opinion on the issue while in session, but don’t “poll/vote” in exec session)
  - Must conduct a Roll Call vote to go into Exec Session; if all agree, don’t have to state names, but if one votes against, must indicate name and their vote.
  - Cannot allow everyone to attend or it will be viewed as “not an Exec Meeting”
  - Can pick and choose who gets to go into session
- ✚ Parliamentary Procedure must be followed at all meetings (open and executive).

Commissioner Riegel commented that years ago the Commissioners were called upon to assist the Division Administrator in decisions on hiring Home Administrators, and asked if this was necessary. Julie responded that the Statute does not list this as a function of the Commissioners, so it is not required. However, since the Commission has a good pulse on the community it would be very helpful.

**IDAHO DIVISION OF VETERANS SERVICES FINANCIAL REPORT:**

Debbie Spence presented the Commissioners with the 2008-2009 Proposed Rate Changes for the three Idaho State Veterans Homes (see attached). Dave Brasuell asked Debbie if these increases still allowed our Homes to remain competitive in their respective communities. Debbie explained that even with these increases, charges at any of the State Veterans Home are substantially lower than same services at a private sector home, so yes, we still stay very competitive.

Commissioner Pitcher moved to approve the increase in the maximum charge for **residents admitted prior to July 1, 2000** from \$142.00 to \$146.00/day, effective June 1, 2008. Commissioner Napier seconded. A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Pitcher moved to approve the increase in the maximum charge for **private pay residents** from \$ 134.00 to \$137.00/day plus ancillary. Commissioner Napier seconded, a vote was held and the motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Pitcher moved to approve the increase in the maximum charge for **Non-Veteran Spouses** from \$ 134.00 to \$137.00/day plus ancillaries and current VA per diem. Commissioner Gimpel seconded the motion. A vote resulted in the motion passing unanimously.

Debbie informed the Commission that the approved FY09 Budget for the Division is \$35,501,000, which includes \$10.5 million for the proposed new cemetery. The funding breakout is as follows:

Receipts	\$ 7,400,598 (21%)
Medicaid Receipts	\$ 7,218,602 (20%)
Endowment	\$ 457,000 (1%)
Fed Funds Medicare	\$ 2,529,125 (7%)
Federal Funds VA	\$16,091,875 (46%)
General Funds	\$ 1,803,800 (5%)

The expenditures breakout is anticipated to be:

Operating	\$17,499,000 (49%)
Personnel	\$17,352,400 (49%)
Capital Outlay	\$ 585,000 (2%)
Emergency Relief	\$ 64,600 (0%)

**QUESTION/ANSWER PERIOD ON THE VETERANS HOMES, THE OFFICE OF VETERANS ADVOCACY AND THE STATE VETERANS CEMETERY FY07 THIRD QUARTER OPERATIONS REPORTS:**

**Pocatello Veterans Home Operations Report:**

Brent Schneider provided the Commission with a recap of events and happenings over the past quarter at the Pocatello Home.

As always, the Pocatello Home continues to have concerns about census. As the numbers continue to be low, it is hoped that with the addition of Medicare this number will begin to rise. As of today's meeting, Brent reports that there are two (2) Medicare residents, with one more coming next week.

In the area of Marketing, critical to increasing census, Brent has met with the area discharge planners, letting them know the Pocatello Home is now Medicare certified, opening the door for more residents. Within the next week, this program will be extended to orthopedic surgeons and hospitals – an area that has not been actively pursued before now.

The new Physical Therapy contract is now in place. Functional Pathways Therapy (the same provider as at the Boise Home) received the contract, and they are doing everything they can to assure they have adequate staff, including signing bonus's. Additionally, they have commented that the rehab/physical therapy room at the Pocatello Home is one of the best they have ever had to work with and it has been a key point in hiring.

Pharmacy receipts are finally coming in regularly and this is expected to continue.

Recently the flooring in the east and west wings and the kitchen had to be replaced, resulting in everything being moved out of the area. Consequently, the activity room had to become the temporary kitchen. Everything went well and took about seven (7) days. One of the residents suggested that the kitchen remain in the activity room and then turn the original kitchen into a dance hall!

The Maintenance staff continues to work extra hard to keep costs down. This is easy for them to do as they feel like the Pocatello Home is their own business, and they do everything they can to make it cost effective. It is because of this staff that we are able to purchase better products, receive cheaper costs and are afforded longer extended warranties.

The Pocatello Home provides a Clinical Site for nursing, dietary, CNAs and other medical nursing areas students where they can come and do their training. Brent reported that currently the Pocatello Home provides the only space they can come for training. The lack of other spaces is due largely to the rules & regulations imposed by Health & Welfare. H&W regulates these sites and it is all based on surveys.

While back in Washington, D.C. in February, Brent and James Roberts, Boise Home Administrator, had the opportunity to meet with Rep. Sali, Rep. Crapo and Rep. Simpsons. These meetings allowed the Administrators to sit down and meet – face to face – with Idaho's Congressional members and express to them the concerns surrounding veterans issues and what they can do to assist. The communication lines

have remained open, and Brent was happy to report that he has had the chance to speak with the Representatives and give/receive updated information.

On a closing note, Brent reported that Staff turnover continues to be low, with the majority of turnover due to temporary or short term employees leaving. Agency hours for this quarter were again at zero.

There were no questions for Brent Schneider to answer.

### **Lewiston Veterans Home Operations Report:**

The census at the Lewiston Home continues to be strong. Clark Graebel, Administrator, reported that currently the census is sitting at 98.5%, and they are holding one bed for the husband of a wife who is currently a resident.

Like the Pocatello Home, the Lewiston Home pharmacy is doing well, and collections are coming in on a routine basis.

The OVA staff has finally been allowed to move into their new space, and they are very happy. However, the ongoing contractor issues continue--the brick that was placed on the outside of the building is crooked, and the contractor says "it's just cosmetic" and is not anxious to fix it. Discussions are currently being held to get this issue resolved. Several other DPW projects are continuing. Clark pointed out that one of the most needed projects is the replacement of the strobe lights in the fire alarm system. Currently when the alarm goes off, three (3) strobe lights activate in the South Hall. However these three lights are not in sequence, and have the possibility to cause epileptic reactions to take place, so these lights are being replaced and synchronized.

Clark reported that he has made contact with Lewis Clark State College (LCSC) concerning having their C.N.A. student's do their clinical work at the Lewiston Home. This is still in the negotiation stages, but should have some updated information at the July Commission meeting. Additionally, the Social Service department has two interns currently work with them at the Lewiston Home.

For the first time in three years, Clark reports that the Lewiston Home had to utilize agency hours during the month of February. Although this use will be temporary, it was necessary to insure the Lewiston Home maintained resident care at standards. Not an easy decision to make, but one that was necessary none the less.

Clark ended without any questions from the Commission.

### **Boise Veterans Home Operations Report:**

James Roberts provided the Commission with an updated status on the Boise Home.

The Boise Home is now up and running with the addition of Medicare. When initial estimates were made, James anticipated around three (3) Medicare patients; to date, the Boise home has had 11 ~ with the average rate at 7, double what was original anticipated. This showing validates what the Boise Home had been saying – Medicare was an untapped market that could help our Homes with the continuous census battle.

The on-going issue with Humana Pharmacy Part D is beginning to be resolved. After hours of investigative work it was discovered that the problem had to do with the contract that was in place. The contract was not the correct contract; however, the problem has been corrected and the applicable contract is now in place. Pharmacy payments should increase over the next quarter.

The CMS billing for Medicare Part A & Part B has been difficult and plagued with problems. However, thanks to the hard work and diligence of the staff, the bugs are all getting worked out and should be totally resolved soon. Once this is completed Medicare revenues should start coming in on a regular basis. The Boise Home has implemented a Triple Check process where all 23 points that must be done to bill Medicare correctly are triple checked to ensure they are done correctly. The floor staff has been included in this process and they are working to assure everything they need to do is done correctly. Additionally, a Medicare nurse has been promoted from within and she too is receiving this training. With everyone working together, following the same training, the Medicare process should become easier and more efficient.

The Boise Home has seen a drop in census over the past quarter. Usual census for Boise is around 90-92%, but due in part to a large flu outbreak, and the residents aging, this percentage took a dip in March. At its lowest, the Boise Home had 84 residents, but that number is now back up to 117. It is worth noting that the families of the residents have made comments about how thankful they are for the Boise Home staffing, and the way they handle the last moments of their loved one's lives. The staff is very careful to call family members in to see the resident near the end, thus giving them time to say their goodbyes. This is very important to the families, and a key component to the outstanding reputation of the Home.

James reported that the nursing hours are currently at 3.43, which is right where they should be. As a result of excellent scheduling by the new staffing director, Scott, Agency hours have dropped dramatically. Scott identified that 83% of the Agency use hours were contributed to C.N.A. position, so he started looking to see why. His research indicated that the majority leave because of gas/food/living expenses, not because of benefits and hourly wages. As these expenses continue to rise it will become more important for the Homes to address the hourly wage discrepancy with private industry.

Activities at the Boise Home continue to be many, and very exciting. On St. Patrick's Day the residents were treated to dancing by the young Celtic dancers. This visit was very well received and enjoyed by all. The residents have also been treated to Steelhead Hockey games and Stamped Basketball games.

Changes in staff continue to take place, and this past quarter has seen the departure of Tiffany Buchannan from the Activities Department and Debra Burt from the Business Office. The search for Tiffany's replacement has begun and should be completed soon. Debra has been replaced by Jan Bagley, who brings vast knowledge of business office procedures and supervision. Sarah Yoder has moved into the Administrative Assistant position and continues to work on her AIT. With Sarah's help many projects needing to be accomplished are getting completed.

The Boise Home Volunteer Program continues to be very strong and reliable. These irreplaceable assets have logged over 9000 hours in volunteer time, a contribution that stays steady and grows constantly. This is a great complement to Phil Hawkins and his staff, without whom this would not be possible.

As anticipated and reported in previous quarters, there are several Department of Public Works projects scheduled for the Boise Home. These projects are about ready to begin, and should all result in cost savings. As these projects progress reports and updates will be provided.

Much like the Pocatello Home, the Boise Home has interns working in the Social Services Department and also has several Apollo College students doing their clinical work. Having these students in the Home helps to educate them of what is available here, as well as provides good public relations and word-of-mouth recommendations.

In closing, James informed the Commission that Governor Otter held his monthly cabinet meeting at the Boise Home during the past quarter. While here the Governor and his Staff were provided with tours of the Home, and were afforded the opportunity to see first hand what services are provided for our residents. These visits went well and were well received.

Commissioner Riegel thanked James for all of his hard work and for the great job he and his staff are doing.

#### **Idaho State Veterans Cemetery Operations Report:**

Due to an emergency at the Cemetery, Zach was called away. Jim Adams provided the Commission with the Cemetery report.

Things at the Cemetery are going well and everyone is getting adjusted to the change in management and staffing. To help facilitate this, Susan Lowman-Thomas provided the Cemetery staff with a day-long retreat where they all participated in activities and training designed to strengthen them and bring them closer together. This training was very well received and enjoyed, and the staff came away with a different outlook on their jobs and their positions within the Cemetery family.

There continues to be a problem with after-hour activities on the Cemetery grounds. These activities range from bike riding, to horseback riding, to kids with beer, etc. The



new security system is helping Zach get this under control, but it will take some time for it to be resolved. Zach, with the help of Patti Murphy, IDVS Public Relations Officer, is sending letters out to the bicycle clubs and other community organizations, emphasizing the sacredness of the solemn grounds, and asking for their assistance in getting the word out to the community that these activities are prohibited and asking them to please respect this request.

Plans are under way for the Memorial Day ceremony. Don Landin will be Master of Ceremonies and Dan Eismann, Supreme Court Justice will be the key note speaker. Once again this year Zach has arranged for the buses to be available to shuttle attendees, and the Optimist Football League has donated the use of their large parking lot.

The Cemetery did receive some good news recently. In the past, there has been a two (2) year limit on how long after death a veteran could receive burial plot allowance. Thanks to PL110-157, that two (2) year limit has been removed and the Cemetery is now able to retro bill back to October 2006. This change means the Cemetery should be receiving approximately \$25,000 in back allowance payments. The families of the deceased veterans who paid the \$300 burial fee will be receiving a letter from the Cemetery staff, asking them if they want the \$300 they paid back, or if they would like to donate it back into the Indigent Fund. The Cemetery Staff will then do as they wish.

At last Commission meeting it was asked if Zach could look into placing Plexiglas around the exposed areas at the Committal Shelter. Zach has looked into this and is getting the bids. However, with the heaters that were donated by the Nampa Elks, this has not been such an issue. Zach will continue to evaluate this request, will look at the cost and will make a decision based on all of the factors.

Customer Service Survey for the Cemetery are now being done at time of service, not many months later as has been the practice. By making this change, immediate feedback can be received and families can better recall what was good and what needs to be changed. This will result in more valuable, timely feedback and information.

The hunt for land for the Eastern Idaho Cemetery continues. Zach has met with and spoken to several interested parties, but nothing has developed yet. Administrator Brasuell requested a presentation-type board that he can take with him when he speaks to different groups around the state. This board needs to identify the different types of land being sought, the pros and cons of the cemetery, economic impacts, etc. This type of presentation may require the assistance of a media production group, and requests for this service have gone out, but as of yet nothing has come back in.

Susan Lowman-Thomas commented to the Commission what a great leader Zach is, and how nice it is to have peace and tranquility among the staff. Since Zach has taken over there has been no hostility and no turnover – both of which are very welcome changes.

#### **Office of Veterans Advocacy Operations Report:**

Gina Stamper, State Veterans Office, Boise Home, sat in for Tom Ressler, who was in Phoenix participating in the VFW Training.

Gina reported that over the past week there have been 272 claims processed, with the month of March seeing between 21-48 new claims filed per day, which is the largest month the OVA has ever seen.

In addition to the claims filings, there were 81 appeals last month, a couple of which brought large settlements for local veterans. Jacque Chung Hee was successful in obtaining a \$60k retro payment for a local veteran and Gina Stamper succeeded in securing a \$120k payment. These settlements came after six (6) years of hard work and perseverance; a direct result of the commitment put forth by the OVA office and staff.

The Emergency Grant program continues to be utilized by those veterans in need. To date, \$21k of \$30k funding has been spent. Questions in the past have been asked concerning the funding amount and if it were sufficient. Gina reported that Tom feels the \$30k is right on track and that it does not need to be increased at this time.

Gina reminded the Council that she will be attending the Tri-State Women Veterans Meeting in Oregon in April. Gina's participation in this conference will help her in the planning of the Conference next year, which is planned to be held in Idaho. There are several local women veterans planning to attend this conference and all are looking forward to a wonderful time. Thanks to the hard work of Jim Adams, and the generous donations of VFW Post 63-(\$1500), IVAL-Boise (\$1500), ACUVC (\$200), VFW National (\$500) and AL National (\$500), Gina has successfully secured the funding needed for the dinner the Idaho group is sponsoring, and has also obtained some Idaho items she will be placing at each participant's seat. Upon returning Gina will provide an update on how things went, what needed to be changed and her plans for next years conference here in Idaho. Gina will also assemble a committee to help her plan for next year's conference.

The Boise VA currently has TRIP training on line, which takes users through the process a claim go through. This training helps the Service Officers better understand the process, thus allowing them to better serve and assist the veterans. Bob Cooper and Rocky, both Service Officers in the Lewiston Home, have completed this training, and the others will be doing so soon.

Gina informed the Commission that the Annual Service Officers School will be held in Boise, August 12-14, at the DoubleTree Hotel. Plans are that Tom Ressler will be contacting Commissioner Riegel to put together a letter that will go out to all of the County Commissioners, encouraging them to send their Service Officers to this excellent training.

The number of veterans being serviced by the Outreach being held at the Caldwell CBOC has doubled. Gina is currently offering this service once a month, working hand-in-hand

with Dr. Riley & Claudia. As the demand for this service increases there is potential to add additional days – it all depends on demand.

Clark Graebel wanted to know if this same procedure was going to be used in the new Lewiston CBOC office. Gina responded that she was not sure what the plans for that CBOC were, but that she would mention it to Tom and have him follow up upon his return.

Commissioner Pitcher suggested that the OVA blanket the Northern Idaho area with information about this new clinic. This suggestion comes as a result of learning that several veterans in the Northern Idaho region had no idea that there was an OVA office in the Lewiston Home. This information will be passed on to Tom as well.

### **Division of Veterans Services Operations Report:**

Administrator Dave Brasuell provided the Commission with an update on the activities within the Division.

The State of Washington is opening a new Long Term Care Nursing Home in Walla Walla. This is a great location with a good service area, and should not have an impact on the Lewiston Home as most of their residents come from Northern Idaho.

The Medicare transition is in full swing, and has been a lot of work. Dave thanked the staff for all of their hard work during this time, and for all of the dedication to ensure everything is done correctly. As James mentioned, the increase in numbers indicates that this was an untapped market, for which there is a need.

During the recent Cabinet Meeting Gov. Otter conveyed his concerns about the state receipts and informed everyone that he is tracking the receipts weekly. As a forewarning and precaution, Governor Otter mentioned that there is a possibility of hold backs, so everyone should start looking at their budgets and getting a plan in place. Due to the diligence of Debbie Spence and the financial section, IDVS is in a position that we could absorb up to 5% without having to impose layoffs or facing challenges to our operations.

Ft. Knox has contacted Dave about a female vet returning to Idaho and their concerns that she receives all that she is entitled to. This is all part of the Warrior In Transition Program, which is designed to follow these veterans and make sure they transition back into society without problems. This young lady is due to arrive in Idaho on April 19, 2008, and Dave will be following up on her arrival and transition and will report her progress back to Ft. Knox.

Rep Marv Hagadorn, a Mustang Navel Officer, and State Representative, has contacted Dave concerning helping with improving veterans benefits in Idaho. Dave reported that he will be meeting with Rep. Hagadorn and working with him to try and fix the existing

problem of lack of benefits for Idaho veterans. As things progress Dave will provide updates.

Dave reported that he will be attending the Opening Ceremonies for the Veterans Women's Conference in Pendleton, Oregon, and will be giving the opening remarks. He is looking forward to attending this conference and to working with Gina Stamper in planning and hosting the conference in Idaho next year.

During this legislative session JFAC and the Governor have all been very good to Veterans Services. Our Supplemental and Annual budgets were all approved, with our request for a vehicle being the only item denied. Approval was given to construct a new building for the Division offices. Current plans are to make this building a "green" building, which may cost more upfront, but will result in decreased costs in heating and electricity. Once this project is completed, as well as the other pending Dept. of Public Works Projects, the energy savings will be reported to the Governor, thus allowing him to see first hand the payback on the expense of construction. By showing a good return on investment the Division will have an easier time justifying future expenditures.

Jim Adams, Administrative Support Manager began by updating the Commission on the status of the legislation passed in 2007 concerning full cost of care of veterans who are 70% or more disable and reside at state homes. Although this legislation was passed in 2007, it has not been followed. Jim and Dave have met with Dwayne Hamlin, Director of the Boise VA, and he assures them that this will start happening, and will be back dated to the March 2007 effective date. What this means to the Homes is a significant amount of money being received, and will also result in veterans who have been turned away from the Homes due to funding, being able to come in or stay at the Homes.

The 2008 Legislative session went well for Veterans. Although we did not ask for much, most everything we asked for was approved. The Governor signed off on the inception of the Purple Heart Trail, which will run down I90 from Washington to Montana, and will be identified as the Purple Heart Trail; Guardsmen and Reservists who live in border states, but serve with Idaho troops, can now attend college in Idaho at in-state tuition rates; on the 2008 State Tax Forms there will be a check off box that will allow tax payers to donate a portion of their refund directly to the Veterans Services – money that will be used to support veterans living in Idaho; Charlie Chapin, DAV, has successfully campaigned for and obtained free camping for disable veterans in the State of Idaho. This is a pilot program and will be re-evaluated in three years. In order to receive this discount the veteran must be at least 50% disabled; and there is now a scholarships for dependants of veterans deceased/wounded since 2001.

Dave and Jim have both asked the military organizations to start talking about legislative issues/concerns at their Conventions and see what topics need to be addressed. If there is no input from the organizations, then nothing will be proposed. As a word of warning, with the current economic situation, tax dollar issues will be difficult to sell; however, Dave and Jim have built several solid relationships with several legislators, and they are now calling Dave to see what he needs them to do, so it appears that Veterans do have

some excellent, strong support. However, requests still need to be thought out and reasonable or they will not be supported.

The Request for Proposal for the Division move has finally come in. The 11 RFP responses were evaluated and the result was awarding the URS (was WGI building) the contract. Plans are to move the Division office on May 1, 2008. Currently the new phone system has arrived (phone numbers are not changing), the computer equipment has all been received and is ready to be installed, and new furniture has been ordered. All money spent for equipment/furniture/computers, etc now will not have to be spent again when the final move is made back into the new building in two years.

Jim reminded everyone that it is time for Rule Changes and if there is anything that needs to be changed they need to let Jim know. Once received Jim will work with Julie Weaver to finalize the changes and prepare them for submission.

Our Medal of Honor and TBI brochures have both been sent to the printers and should be ready for distribution in the next week or so. Anyone wanting copies should contact Tammy Hebdon and let her know how many and she will get them sent out. The updated Benefits Brochures still has some work before it will be ready for distribution, but it too should be ready for distribution in the next few weeks.

Jim Adams has been contacted by Jim Kerns, from Eagle, about holding a fund raiser for veterans. His only stipulation is that ALL of the money raised MUST go to veterans or the event won't happen. Jim has arranged for himself and Phil Hawkins to meet with Mr. Kerns within the next week and get this project moving forward.

Jim and Dave have also been contacted by a gentleman out of Mtn. Home named Mr. Williams. Mr. Williams has a cabin in a prime hunting area, which he does not allow open hunting on. However, he would very much like to donate the use of the Cabin and the opportunity to hunt on his land, to a veteran (possibly two). The only cost to the veteran would be his time. Mr. Williams has also asked his neighbors to donate their land to expand the hunting area. In addition to this generous offer, Mr. Williams also has a huge fishing pond in the Parma area that he wants to donate to the kids of veterans so they can come and fish for free. Once these projects are both up and running, Dave and Jim will approach Mr. Williams and see if he has any land in the Eastern Idaho area that he would like to donate for the Cemetery.

In closing, Jim updated the Commission on the progress of the new web page. Production has begun and Larry Budd, our new IT Technician, has been working with the development company to get this project moving forward. Larry has great experience in this area and reports that the web page company has a prototype in the works that will "knock your socks off". Unveiling of the prototype should take place within the next week or two.

A request has gone out to all staff to help in the development of the new logo for the Division. Jim has made this submission a competition, and the chosen logo creator will be rewarded.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

Commissioner Riegel asked Tammy if she could provide the Commission with new updated phone cards. Tammy said she would get them updated and out to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Pitcher commented that he had received several inquiries about the new benefits brochures and was wondering how they were going to get dispersed? Administrator Brasuell answered that there are not any definite plans, and that he is open to suggestions. Most likely, the brochures will be mailed out to the OVA offices to be dispersed, as well as be posted on the IDVS web page.

Commissioner Pitcher wanted to know about the new pins that IVAL has and is selling. Specifically, Commissioner Pitcher wanted to know how they were being distributed and if they were being sold or just given away. Jim Adams responded that several were given away (to the legislature, Governor's office) but the majority of them have been sold. At the moment there are not any pins available, but more have been ordered and should be received soon. Jim also reported that these pins have been very well received and there is a HUGE demand for them.

Commissioner Riegel wanted to know who the Commissioners were supposed to send their stipend payment to for donation into IVAL. Tammy informed the Commissioners that they could send the money directly to Phil Hawkins for donation into the IVAL account, or they could send it to her and she would get the money to Phil.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

The IHCA Annual Conference will be held in Boise July 21-24, 2008.

### **Next Meeting:**

The next Commission meeting will be July 10, 2008, which happens to be the starting day of the American Legion Conference in Lewiston. Therefore, it was moved by Commissioner Pitcher to move the meeting to July 17, 2008; Commissioner Napier seconded. Discussion followed that suggested leaving the date and moving the location to Lewiston. Vote was held on the motion to move the meeting to July 17, 2008, and the motion failed. Commissioner Pitcher then moved that the Commission meeting be held July 10, 2008, in Lewiston, Idaho; Commissioner Gimpel seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Vote was held and the motion passed unanimously.

As there was no further business, Commissioner Pitcher moved that the meeting be

adjourned; Commissioner Gimpel seconded the motion; all agreed.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

---

Don Riegel, Chairman

---

David Brasuell, Executive Secretary